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Students, Faculty Member Join Ride Against AIDS

May 21, 2012

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – When he is not in Presser Hall teaching music history courses, Stephen Press, associate professor of music history, may be found riding his bike at least 25 miles a day, swimming laps, or running a 10k. While it is not unusual for Press to engage in these activities, this semester he is training for a cause, the FACE AIDS Ride Across America campaign.

A poster for the campaign caught Press's attention. It had a tagline that read, "Become a Man," featuring pictures of a clean-shaven and then fully bearded Vadim Kogan '12, who participated in the ride last summer. Press found the flyer entertaining and attended the informational meeting.

After talking with Kogan and Michael Henry '12, who also biked last year and is the founder of the IWU chapter of FACE AIDS, Press was up for the challenge – not only for personal goals, but for a worthy cause as well.

Press began training at the end of the spring semester. His schedule consists of alternating between running and biking each day, along with occasionally swimming laps. Running helps build endurance, he said, which is what he is most focused on at this point of the process, rather than concentrating on speed. He will be the first Illinois Wesleyan faculty member to join the event.



Stephen Press

Ride Against AIDS has raised over \$130,000 for FACE AIDS and Partners In Health since its inception in 2007. Illinois Wesleyan students joined the Ride in 2010, including Henry and Kogan, and have continued the tradition since. This year, 20 students from 16 schools will bike across the country together with a combined fundraising goal of \$100,000. They will embark on the more than 4,000-mile journey beginning in Half Moon Bay, Calif. on June 18 and ending in Boston, Mass. on August 23.

Four of the 20 students are from Illinois Wesleyan, including Sydney White '14, Manish Mandava '14, Lauren Awdziejczyk '12 and Sam Patel '12.

Awdziejczyk, a biology major and native of Hoffman Estates, Ill., has participated in biking events for a number of causes in the past. She first joined a bike tour with family members in 2003, riding to fight lung cancer. Additionally, through her experience at IWU, Awdziejczyk has

found a passion and appreciation for social justice, a core value of FACE AIDS, which not only works to fight HIV/AIDS, but the stigma attached to the disease as well.

White was inspired to join the ride after listening to a talk Henry gave on his previous experience. "Michael helped me realize that each person has the opportunity to make a difference in the world, but you must be willing to step outside of your comfort zone," said the biology and English literature double major from Lombard, Ill.

While Press will be unable to join the students on the west coast, he plans on meeting the students to bike across Illinois, beginning just shy of the state border in Davenport, Iowa on July 25. Kogan will also join his peers biking across the state. From Davenport, the group will travel an intensive 90 miles east to Peru, Ill., rest and continue another 60 miles to Batavia the next day. After stopping in Batavia, Press will finish the last leg of his trip with the students, traveling 35 miles to Chicago. However, he is still considering the possibility of continuing to South Bend, Ind.

To learn more about the campaign or donate money to the cause, visit www.faceaids.org/raa.

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